

*The Regards a Christian Congregation owe to
their deceased Ministers represented and urged,*

IN A
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE
OLD MEETING in BIRMINGHAM,
DECEMBER 17, 1769.

On Occasion of the much lamented

D E A T H

OF THE REVEREND

Mr. SAMUEL CLARK,

Who departed this Life DECEMBER 6, 1769.

In the Forty-second Year of his Age.

By CALEB ASHWORTH, D.D.

To which is added,

T H E O R A T I O N

DELIVERED AT HIS

I N T E R M E N T,

By WILLIAM HOWELL.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. BUCKLAND, in Pater-noster-Row ;
and T. DECKET, in the Strand. 1770.

[Price Six-pence.]

W. Musgrave

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE
OLD MEETING HOUSE IN BIRMINGHAM

December 17, 1769
On Occasion of the Anniversary

D E A T H

OF THE REVEREND

Mr. SAMUEL CLARK.

Who departed this life December 6, 1769.

In the Forty-second Year of his Age.

By CALLEB ASHWORTH, D.D.

Town of Birmingham.

T H E O R A T I O N

DELIVERED AT HIS

I N T E R M E N T

By WILLIAM HOWELL.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. Baskin, and sold by the Booksellers, in the Strand, 1770.

[Price Six-pence.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE publication of this plain discourse may be thought, perhaps, to need an apology: the following letter contains all the author hath to offer; and at the same time is such an attestation to the character given of the deceased as in justice to his memory ought not to be suppressed.

To the Rev. Dr. ASHWORTH, at Daventry.

“ Rev. and dear S I R,

“ **I**N consequence of some consultations held
“ yesterday, after the Afternoon Service, by
“ the congregation of the Old Meeting in this
“ town, I am desired to present you with their
“ sincere thanks for the Sermon you preached
“ to them the Lord’s day before, upon occa-
“ sion of the death of my late dear brother,
“ the Rev. Mr. Clark. They also make it
“ their earnest and unanimous request that you
“ would print it. I heartily join my friends
“ in this request, as well as in cordial thanks
“ for your very acceptable services among us.
“ I am still the more desirous of your printing
“ your Sermon, as I am persuaded the short
“ sketch which the narrow bounds of a funeral
“ discourse

“ discourse permitted you to give us of the
 “ character and ministerial labours of my late
 “ most worthy brother, may be of use to
 “ young ministers ; and, indeed, to many of
 “ longer standing too. We hope and wish
 “ that nothing may prevent your kind com-
 “ pliance with the request we make to you
 “ with an unanimous importunity.

“ Long may your comforts and usefulness
 “ be continued. I am, with great sincerity
 “ and esteem,

S I R,

Your most humble Servant,

BIRMINGHAM,
 Dec. 25, 1769.



W. HOWELL?

A
S E R M O N

On the DEATH of
The Rev. Mr. SAMUEL CLARK.

WHAT an affecting Scene is this ! A congregation of mourners ! Sadness on every countenance, and all the marks of deep and heart-felt sorrow ! — and the cause — how just ! A loss, so great ! so extensive ! so sudden and unexpected ! My heart, Sirs, sinks within me when I look around me, and think of the occasion of my appearing among you this day. I am distressed for you ; I am distressed for myself : you have lost a most able, faithful, wise, and tender Pastor ; I, a sincere affectionate and faithful friend. Let me intreat you to exercise candour towards me ; and in pity to me, and in kindness to yourselves, to join in a fervent prayer to Almighty God, that he would assist me in the difficult service assigned me ; would direct me to speak a word in season, and enable me to act the part of a skilful in-

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terpreter of that dark and distressing passage of his providence, which we are now to consider. This, I presume, is what you desire; not that I should amuse you, or pronounce a panegyrick on the deceased; but point out your duty, and the improvement you should make of the awful event you so deeply bewail. This, in dependence on God for his assistance and blessing, I would humbly attempt; in which view I recollect no words in which I can so properly address you as those which you find

H E B. xlii. 7.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation:

Yet the passage would have been still more suitable to the occasion, if our translation had been exact. The general air of the sentence, and especially the concluding members of it, shew, that the persons recommended to the regards of the Hebrew Christians were no longer with them, and would officiate among them no more. It should therefore have been rendered,

*Remember them who have had the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose
faith*

faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

In discoursing on these words I will endeavour to illustrate,

First, The *office* here assigned to Christian Ministers :

Secondly, The *regards* which their people are required to maintain to them when they are removed by death : and,

Thirdly, The *motive* by which these regards are enforced.

First, Let us for a few moments attend to the view here given of the office of Christian Ministers, and the relation in which they stand to their people : *they have the rule over them, and speak unto them the word of God.*

1. They are described as ruling the church. Not that they are " Lords over God's heritage," or are to prescribe and command in their own right. We neither possess, nor desire to exercise, a magisterial authority. As we claim no part of your property, but what you yourselves deem a reasonable acknowledgment for our labours among you ; and as we by no means pretend to direct you in your secular affairs, or the management of your business and families ; so we do not desire to dictate to you even in matters of religion, to prescribe ar-

^a 1 Pet. v. 3.

articles of faith, forms of worship, or rules of behaviour, as tho' ^b "we had dominion over your faith," or a power to bind your consciences. It belongs, indeed, to our office to tell you plainly what we apprehend to be truth and duty, and to support what we say by the best arguments we can produce; but, having done this, we have no authority to compel your assent or practice; but must leave the matter to your understandings and consciences in the sight of God. ^c "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord," to whom, as head of the church, unlimited faith and obedience are due both from us and you; "and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake."

Nevertheless, Christian Ministers are often described as having some kind of authority, or presidency and guidance, in the church. It is required as a necessary qualification of a Bishop "that he rule well his own house, with all gravity, having his children in subjection, for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" The ^e elders that rule," or preside, "well, are spoken of as worthy of double honour:" and it is not to be imagined that St. Paul excited Titus to an act of usurpation, when he bad

^b 2 Cor. i. 24. ^c 2 Cor. iv. 5: ^d 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. ^e v. 17.

bad him ^f “ speak, exhort and rebuke with all authority,” as one who was authorized to deliver the directions and orders of Christ. Gospel ministers are not only, as other Christians are, to believe in Christ and obey him ; but to bear also a commission under him, a commission which has dignity and influence annexed to it ; to preside in publick assemblies, to lead the devotions and guide the councils of the church. They are *guides* ; for so the margin reads the word which we translate *Rulers*. Accordingly, as shepherds, they are to go before the flock ; as officers, to train and marshal the soldiers of Christ, and to give them the word of command, in his name as their common General. Hence it is that private Christians are required not only to love their ministers, and ^g be kindly affectioned towards them, as brethren ; but to pay some degree of reverence to their character, as persons who bear a respectable office under the captain of their salvation. There never was a man less disposed to encourage an exorbitant priestly power than the Apostle Paul ; yet he exhorts Christians in private life not only ^h “ to receive their ministers with all gladness, and to hold them in reputation ; but ⁱ to obey those that

^f Tit. ii. 15.

^g Heb. xiii. 17.

^h Rom. xii. 10.

ⁱ Philip. ii. 29.

that have the rule over them, and submit themselves." But I add,

2. They are described as speaking the word of God.

This might be said of the Apostles with peculiar propriety, as they ^k "received the spirit which is from God that they might know the things which are freely given unto us by him; which things they spake, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

It appears likewise that miraculous gifts and powers were in the first ages of Christianity communicated to many others besides the Apostles: undoubtedly to prophets and evangelists; and, probably, to most of those who were employed as pastors and teachers; tho' none of these might, like the Apostles, have a compleat view of the gospel by immediate revelation, nor be under a plenary guidance in preaching it.

Of whatever rank, therefore, those ministers were of whom the Apostle speaks, 'tis probable they had extraordinary divine illumination. But we pretend to nothing of this kind, nor require you to regard our assertions as coming from God. We have, however, his word in our hands; and, by a faithful use
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^k 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

of our acquaintance with the sacred languages ; by an attentive, and, we hope, an impartial study of its general design, and a diligent comparison of one part of it with another : by close meditation, and perusing the labours of wise, learned, and holy, tho' uninspired men, who have taken pains to explain it ; by fervent prayer to be guided of God, and an honest attention to the light he may afford us, we labour to discover the meaning of scripture ; and “ we ¹ hope we are not of those who corrupt the word of God ; but as of sincerity, as of God, as in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.” Yet, since with our utmost care and pains we dare not be confident that all we say is right, we desire you to examine for yourselves, being never better pleased than when you search the scriptures daily. For we do not pretend to bring you a new revelation ; or to be infallible interpreters of that already given. Nevertheless, it was said of persons who were no more inspired than ourselves, ^m “ the priests lips should preserve knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts :” and so far as we adhere to the sacred oracles, saying no other things than those which Moses and the prophets, Jesus Christ and his Apostles, have said,

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 17.^m Malac. ii. 7.

we claim your regards, not as to conjectures, or reasonings of our own, but to the word of God ; and must take the liberty to warn you, that you neglect it at your peril.

Having thus considered the office assigned in the text to christian ministers, I proceed

Secondly, To point out the regards which their people are required to maintain to them when they are removed by death. *Remember them who have had the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow.* The duty of a people in such a case is here pointed out in three important articles : The text calls upon them,

1. To retain a regard for their memory. You will observe the Apostle is here speaking to Christian congregations concerning their deceased ministers. He is not addressing their surviving relatives. *They* seldom need an exhortation to remember the partners of their blood, and the objects of their most affectionate regards, especially such as have been singularly wise and faithful, tender and kind. A thousand occasions will be painful monitors to them, to bring the object of their affection to mind, and indeed the aching heart does not want a monitor.

But the wound which is caused by the death of more distant friends, however painful at first,

first, is generally more slight and sooner healed ; perhaps too soon, before the salutary ends are answered, for which it was given. The text supposes that a people may too quickly forget those who have laboured among them in the word and doctrine, and therefore calls upon them to cherish the remembrance of them.

Indeed to remember them is a tribute due to the worth and excellence of their character, and a proper expression of gratitude to him, " who made them able ministers of the New Testament ; it may fix on the mind the sacred truths they have delivered, and render their examples of great and lasting advantage.

There is a kind of mechanical and instinctive remembrance, suggested by natural affection ; and this, in the present case, must surely be vivid and permanent. But that remembrance which the text recommends, is a virtue ; it must therefore be voluntary ; retained with design, and directed to some valuable end. Suffer then the word of exhortation : let it be matter of intention and study to place before your minds the images of those who have had the rule over you. Often think within yourselves, and mention to each other what they said, and what they did. ° You are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly,

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and

° 2 Cor. iii. 6.

° 1 Thes. ii. 10.

and unblameably they behaved themselves among you : would it be decent, would it be friendly, or wise, or grateful, to forget ^p what manner of men they were among you for your sakes ? “ No,” one and another of you will surely say, “ I shall never forget them ; I shall carry an affectionate and mournful remembrance of them through life.” I doubt it not. But then consider, in what view, and to what purpose, you should remember them ; which leads me to add,

2. When a people are recollecting their deceased ministers they should place before their minds the idea of them as discharging the peculiar duties of their character.

Distinguishing names were early given to the officers of the church ; so that the Hebrew Christians would easily have known whom the Apostle meant, had he called them *Ministers*, *Elders*, or *Bishops* : but he chose to point them out by a description of their character, suggesting thereby the views in which he thought it was peculiarly proper their surviving friends should recollect them. “ Remember them who have had the rule over you, and have spoken unto you the word of God.”

Remem-

Remember them, Sirs, who have had the rule over you. Recollect the solemnity, the genuine warmth of heart, the rational and manly piety, in a word, the propriety and dignity with which they conducted your publick devotions: with what an apparent awe of God, with what an affectionate sense of his goodness and mercy through a Redeemer, ^a as though they had seen him who is invisible: with what a vigorous flow of benevolent and kind affections: with what plainness, simplicity, and strength of language; while every thing in their manner made it impossible to suspect they were merely acting a part, or ever conceived and uttered a prayer, in which their hearts were not deeply engaged.—Recollect the coolness, the gentleness, the moderation, ^a the meekness of wisdom, with which they presided in the deliberations and councils of the church;—the tenderness, prudence, and publick spirit, with which pastoral inspection and government have been maintained.

Remember them who have had the rule over you, as speaking to you the word of God.

Call to mind the pains they have taken to establish its authority. ^a “The testimonies of the Lord being their own delight, and the men of their counsel,” they were solicitous that

you might ' know the certainty of those things, in which you have been instructed." Recollect their masterly defences of our holy religion, when they set themselves professedly to state its evidence; and the many pertinent remarks, to evince its truth, which they have made on its nature and genius, the character and circumstances of its first preachers, and other articles of the like kind, as proper occasions presented themselves.

• Bear in mind the respect with which they always treated the word of God: the unaffected solemnity with which they read it in publick; and that, far from quoting it in a trifling manner, or making any ludicrous allusions to it in conversation, they ever manifested such regard to it, as shewed that it filled them both with awe and with delight.

You know that they maintained the word of God to be the supreme and only infallible rule of faith and manners, in comparison with which the opinions of the wisest, the most learned, and the best of men, and the creeds and decisions of the most venerable councils are of no authority: that it was their great concern in the whole of their ministrations, to lead you to form a scriptural religion; " that your faith might not stand in the wisdom of men,

* Luke i. 5.

* 1 Cor. ii. 5.

men, but in the power of God." And surely this well deserves to be always kept in remembrance.

And can you forget the pains they took in expounding the word of God : the diligence, the holy skill and integrity with which they opened the design of each sacred book ; not only explaining the signification, the force and beauty of particular phrases, but the connexion of one passage with another, and the drift of the whole ? Shall the manner in which this service has been adapted to reach the conscience, and mend the heart, be forgotten ? Forbid it wisdom ! forbid it gratitude ! Let this labour of love recommend the scriptures to your attentive perusal. Call to mind the general principles they have laid down for the more profitable study of them ; and let the recollection of those particular remarks they have made, so far as you are able to recollect them, engage you to read those parts they have expounded with more profit and delight.

Let me beg, Sirs, that you will often call to mind the great articles of the word of God, which they have spoken unto you.—Let it never be forgotten that they have laboured to give you just views of God, as the foundation of all true religion ; of his adorable excellen-

cies and perfections, and of his universal government, both natural and moral : that at the same time they have warned you not to rest in speculation, or lay any stress, in this or in any other case, upon the best set of opinions ; but have urged it, as an article of universal and infinite importance, that you should fear, and love, and worship God ; should devote yourselves to his service with all your hearts, and pay unlimited obedience to his commands ; should place your trust and confidence in him, and resign to his disposals without reserve ; should live to him as your highest end, and choose and delight in him as your supreme happiness.—Remember that they have spoken to you the word of God * concerning his son Jesus Christ our Lord : that they have faithfully and tenderly represented the folly, ingratitude, and danger of sin, and have solemnly warned the sinner to fly from the wrath to come : that they have pointed out the Lord Jesus Christ, † “ whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood, as ‡ the only name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved ;” and have taught you to regard his intercession as the solid and only foundation of hope in all your devotional intercourse with the Father. Call to mind the

* Rom. i. 3. † Rom. iii. 25. ‡ Acts iv. 13.

the affection with which they spake of the mercy of God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as subjects which melted and delighted their hearts, gave a spring to every active principle of their souls, and inspired them with heavenly hopes.—Let it be well considered; that while they ^a preached Christ, they warned every man, and taught every man in all wisdom, that they might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus : that they ^b taught you to observe all things, whatever he hath commanded, and have particularly explained the nature and necessity of ^c repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. You have often been told, that religion is an inward vital principle ; and that it will have the most extensive influence : that it will controul and subdue every irregular appetite and passion ; will kindle in the soul pious and kind affections ; will infallibly engage to the practice of every divine, social, and personal virtue ; will secure the strict discharge of relative duties ; will raise a man above mean and selfish views, and inspire his heart with a zeal to do good : You have been reminded, that the ^d Gospel “ teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts ; to live soberly, righteously and godly in the

^a Col. i. 28.

^b Mat. xxviii. 20.

^c Acts xx. 21.

^d Tit. ii. 12.

the present world, looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God ;” and to “ have ^e our conversation in heaven.” Think of these things, Sirs, that ^f “ your conversation may be as becometh the Gospel,” and that you may ^g “ adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”—— Among other important articles, remember they have spoken unto you the consolations of God’s word : have given you most affecting representations of the love of God ; the care and faithfulness of Christ ; and the glorious privileges of the gospel covenant, as the security and joy of all sincere Christians in every imaginable circumstance of life or death. Recollect, how skilfully they opened and applied the promises of Scripture ; in how rational a manner they explained the office of the blessed Spirit, and what encouragement they gave you from the word of God to seek and hope for his enlightening, strengthening and comforting influences. His promised aids were their own support and joy ; and it was their frequent prayer that “ the God of peace would sanctify you wholly, that your whole spirit, soul, and body, might be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord ;” and that “ the God of hope would fill you with joy and

^e Phil. iii. 20.^f Phil. i. 27.^g Tit. ii. 10.

and peace in believing, that you might abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

Once more, remember *how* they have spoken unto you the word of God: with what clearness; what seriousness; what earnestness; what constant attention to the characters, the circumstances, the capacities, the taste and relish, the sentiments and prejudices of their hearers; and with what apparent concern to bring it home to your cases and consciences. Did an attentive hearer ever doubt whether they believed and felt and relished what they said; or suspect them of having any other aim than the honour of their divine master, and the edification and salvation of souls? Bear it, Sirs, in mind that they have ^k "exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, (as a father doth his children) that you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory;" and that, ^l "being affectionately desirous of you, they spake as if they were willing to impart to you, not the gospel of God only, but also their own souls, because ye were dear to them." I proceed to remark, that

3. Another instance of regard, which the Apostle requires a people to shew to their deceased ministers, is an imitation of their faith.

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Whose

^k 1 Thes. ii. 12.

^l ib. 3.

Whose faith follow. Labour, my friends, to gain such clear evidence, and such lively apprehensions of the great principles of religion, as produced the excellent dispositions of their hearts, and guided and animated their conduct. — ^m “ You believe in God, believe also in his Son.” It was the great article of their faith, that ⁿ “ God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life :” and the joy of their hearts that they could say, ^o “ I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” — Imitate that steady trust in God, built on a firm belief of his universal government, his all-sufficiency to all imaginable purposes, and his everlasting fidelity to his covenant and promise, which kept their minds perpetually serene and cheerful :—and labour to attain and preserve those lively views of invisible and future realities, by which they were so apparently governed and supported.

But the word we render *faith* might have been translated *fidelity*. So it is often rendered ; and it is probable this is the idea of the text, since fidelity is rather a more proper object

^m John xiv. 1.

ⁿ John iii. 16

^o 2 Tim. i. 12.

object of imitation than faith. Be concerned, my friends, to imitate that strict integrity and honour, which engaged all their friends to repose an almost unlimited confidence in them.—Copy their punctuality, which, when any service was undertaken, made a point of doing more than was promised or expected, rather than less; sooner, than later.—Imitate that sincere friendship, which all experienced to whom any professions of friendship were made; that faithfulness which scorned to flatter, which would not suffer sin upon a neighbour; and, while it kept perfectly clear of a pragmatistical, impertinent, and meddlesome conduct, suggested wholesome advice, and administered needful reproof in the most tender and obliging manner.—Imitate that strict regard to principle, which never would suffer them to offer the least violence to their understandings and consciences in matters of religion, on any consideration:—and let their faithfulness to the great trust you reposed in them, when you called them to preside over you, and speak to you the word of God, and the unwearied and honest pains they have taken for your improvement and salvation, teach you fidelity to the souls committed to your care.

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Characters like these shine by their own lustre. To be admired, it is enough that they be seen; especially that they be seen in real life. It may, therefore, seem unnecessary to say any thing to recommend the imitation of them. But to admire and to imitate are two very different things. We can scarce forbear the one, when we may be little inclined to the other. Have patience with me then, nor think it needless that, having pointed out your duty, I attempt in a few words to illustrate,

Thirdly, the motive by which these regards are enforced. *Considering the end of their conversation.*

The end which faithful ministers propose to themselves in preaching and living is the glory of God; ^a that “Christ may be magnified in them, whether it be by life or by death;” and that immortal souls may be “built up in knowledge and faith, in holiness, usefulness, and comfort unto eternal salvation.” ^r It is their study, that they may shew themselves approved unto God; and if they may but ^s finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God, nothing else will

^a Phil. i. 20.

^r 2 Tim. ii. 15

^s Acts xx. 24.

will greatly move them." Important end! glorious object indeed! To consider how much this was the aim of those who have spoken unto you the word of God, should endear their memory, and powerfully engage you to imitate their fidelity. And all this might well enough be understood to be included in the signification of the English word *end*; or of some Greek words, which are commonly translated by it: but * that which the Apostle uses in the text properly signifies the issue, event or exit of any thing; and is never used for the object of a person's aim. By the word *conversation* we may most naturally understand the course and tenor of a man's life.

The import, then, of the Apostles's exhortation is this, Consider the event and issue of their lives; what consequences have arisen from the manner in which they have ordered their conversation.

It is a distressing thought, but may be recollected with advantage to the purpose in hand, *that their conversation is ended*: Their labours are finished; their course is run: they will minister unto you in holy things no more, and you can no more give them those proofs of your love and gratitude, which you have
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formerly given, and would greatly rejoice if you could still give them. This is your grief; it pierces and rends your hearts. But did you love them? are you now more sensible of their worth and the tenderness of your affection for them, than while they were living? Remember the word of God, which they have spoken, and imitate their faith. This is the best expression of your love: thus you may still profit by them, though you will hear their voice, and enjoy their converse and instructive example no more; thus you may recompence the sorrow which the apprehended want of usefulness gave them, while they were in this world: It will afford them joy even in heaven, if they may be permitted to know that their death has, by the blessing of God, been useful; and that the seeds of divine instruction, which they scattered, and which they feared were buried and lost, have sprung up in fruits of holiness, since they were laid in the grave.

But the text more particularly calls us to attend to the *manner* in which their conversation ended. Permit me here to remind you of a few important circumstances. And

1. Consider how honourably their conversation has ended with respect to themselves.

Bad as the world is, persons of thorough and consistent goodness will be beloved and honoured. If they who preside in the church act up to their character, they will be highly esteemed for their work's sake. If they take pains to discharge the duties of their office well, and appear to be in earnest in their work: if they "set at defiance" the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God:" if a vein of piety and benevolence runs through their whole lives, and they preserve an easy dignity of behaviour at all times, and in all companies: if prudence, and moderation, and candour appear in their whole conduct: if they employ their interest to conciliate the minds of Christians to each other, and instead of priding themselves in the favour and partiality shewn to themselves, take pains to support the character, the usefulness, and the comfort of their brethren: if they treat those that differ from them with kindness and respect, and in all their conversation breathe a peaceable and catholick temper: in a word, if the tenor of their conduct is directed to do good, and to ^x give no offence

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▪ 2 Cor. iv. 2.

▪ 2 Cor. vi. 3.

to any, that the ministry may not be blamed :
 —these articles will be observed, and reported to their honour. By such conduct prejudice is softened, ill-will is melted down, slander is silenced, and ^y they who are of the contrary part are ashamed, having no evil thing to say. Ministers of this character commonly meet with few flights, and little opposition ; they have the good word and good wishes of persons of different denominations, and derive reputation to their own. They are esteemed, revered, and honoured while they live, and their death is the cause of general mourning. The stranger pays the tribute of a good word, and drops an honest tear, while neither words nor tears can express the sorrows of more intimate acquaintance and friends.

It may be thought selfish and mean to pay a great regard to this consideration ; but surely some degree of concern about our reputation is an allowable and laudable principle. It is certainly a desirable thing to live on good terms with the world around us, and to be esteemed, especially by the wise and good. ^z So to act our parts in life, as not to be missed when we retire

^y Tit. ii. 8.

^z See this subject represented with great justice and spirit by Dr. Kippis, in his funeral sermon for the late Rev. Mr. Laugher of Hackney.

retire from it, is surely what we cannot wish; what we cannot endure. If, on the other hand, to live in the highest esteem, and die universally lamented, be at all the object of desire, “remember them who have had the rule over you, and imitate their faith, considering the end of their conversation,” that so you may share the like honour, living and dying, with them.

But this topic may suggest more generous motives.—Let me call upon you to consider,

2 The tendency of their conversation to do good, and the benefits which have arisen from it to others.

The best of ministers have, indeed, lamented that their success has not been equal to their wishes and hopes, and it is to be feared that they who have spoken to you the word of God, may have had cause for this complaint. Consider, Sirs, “you that would none of their counsel, and despised all their reproof,” is it not a grievous thing to have neglected, and now to have lost such excellent means of conversion? Is it not dreadful to think that your ministers, after having often lamented your inattention, and poured forth their prayers for you with aching

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hearts

^a Prov. i. 30.

hearts and streaming eyes, are now gone to their master ; and obliged, in vindication of themselves and of him, to give witness against you : how faithfully they have pleaded his cause, and urged his claim to you ; how tenderly they have represented the compassion of Christ ; how awfully they have pointed out death, judgement, and eternity ; how affectionately they have charged and intreated you to consider the worth and the danger of your souls : and all to no purpose. Are there not others of you who formerly were of very imperfect and dubious characters ; who have been careless and lived at random, or censorious and uncharitable ; fond of dangerous pleasures or unfair gains ; negligent of the worship of God in your families, and the religious education of your children : and who are so still, after all the plain and faithful admonitions, instructions and exhortations which have been addressed to you on these heads ? Is it nothing to you that another ^b “ burning and shining light, in which for a season ye rejoiced,” is, in regard to you, unprofitably consumed, and is now extinguished. I make no apology for this freedom of speech : the case is too sad, the occasion and the state of my mind too solemn, to admit of compliment.

Yet

^b John v. 35.

Yet I hope better things of many of you. I believe the Lord Jesus Christ doth not suffer any of his faithful ministers to labour entirely in vain; and I am persuaded this has not been the case of those, who have spoken to you the word of God. Have not many ignorant persons been instructed by them, and many wandering sheep returned to the bishop and shepherd of souls? a blessed work! of which an inspired Apostle speaks with raptures? “Know ye, says he, that he that converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” Have not “the things which were ready to die been strengthened;” and many persons been enabled to live and die with more honour and comfort, in consequence of their faithful pains with them in publick and in private? It were uncharitable to make it a question whether you are not, as a society, become more intelligent and judicious, serious and exemplary, more firmly united in brotherly love to each other, and more candid towards those who differ from you; and whether the rising generation are not formed to act their part in life with some distinguished degree of reputation, usefulness and comfort.

E 2

Now

* James v. 20.

* Rev. iii. 2.

Now if the conversation of a minister produces such excellent effects, surely their people should attentively consider it ; and be thereby engaged in their proper stations to imitate their faith, and to pursue the course which has had so blessed an issue !

My subject might naturally lead me to mention the *comfortable* end of their conversation. One is inclined to expect it would close with peaceful reflexions, and joyful prospects : that those who have employed their lives in speaking the word of God, would bear testimony to its truth and worth with their dying lips : that they would spend their last moments in instructive and comfortable discourse with their friends ; renewing, in those circumstances of peculiar advantage, their advices and charges, and displaying in their conduct the power and the consolations of religion. Such the dying behaviour of eminent christians, both ministers and others, has often been ; and it well deserves to be considered, as nothing can be better adapted to impress the careless, or establish and comfort their pious survivors. But the great head of the church is sometimes pleased to prevent all this, by the manner and circumstances of their death from whom we might be most ready to hope for it ; as in the present case, by that affecting stroke of his providence

vidence, which deprives you and myself of the consolation and benefit of enlarging on this consideration. Let me beg, however, that in the view I am now recommending, you would consider,

3. The glorious state on which they entered when their conversation with us came to an end. But here my tongue and my imagination fail me. I cannot describe, I cannot conceive the joy of a glorified spirit in the moment it is set at liberty from the incumbrance of flesh and blood, from sin, and sorrow, and temptation :—with what transport it flew to its kindred spirits ; not now like those it once loved and admired, but purified, enlarged and rendered every way more excellent by a long residence in heaven :—how it was received and congratulated by Angels, those kind and happy and glorious beings, who are assigned its intimate and eternal associates :—how it exults in the presence of him * whom it loved, when yet it had not seen him, and in whom it even then rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory : —what extasy it felt when God the judge of all said to it, † “ Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord : ” —what full satisfaction will spring up thro’ the endless ages of eternity from contemplating the divine conduct towards it, and the exercise of the most vigorous

* 1 Pet. i. 8.

† Mat xxv. 21.

rous love and thankfulness to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb:--or what new delight may arise from the successive arrival of those, who, ² having been "its hope and joy here, shall be a crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ." These things surpass the language and the imagination of mortals : but this we know, "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and those that have turned many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."¹

Transporting thought ! who can lament the loss of a friend so highly honoured, so completely blessed ! who would not wish to remember and imitate a conversation, the end of which is so glorious !

And now, my friends, having finished the plan at first proposed, I presume you will expect that something be said in particular, concerning your late excellent pastor. But, as to this, I have in a great measure prevented myself. For though in conformity with the language of the text, I have all along spoken of *them*, as of several persons ; and no doubt there have been many to whom your regards are due, and to whom the principal things I have said may be justly applied : yet you must have observed, that

¹ 1 Thes. ii. 19.

² Dan. xii. 3.

that I have principally had *him* in my eye. I am persuaded that the painting, however coarse and imperfect, has preserved a likeness, which all of you must have discerned. And I am sure you can witness, that though every feature and line has been taken from the life, yet had the portrait been compleat, it must have been greatly heightened and have received many additional beauties. As far as I have endeavoured to draw his character, it hath not been with a view to embellish it; but merely to assist your improvement of that sad event, by which you are deprived of him: and should this attempt succeed, a higher testimonial will be given to his worth, than any tongue or pen can give. Your peaceful and friendly, your holy and useful, your spiritual and heavenly lives, will be the best panegyrick, the most valuable and honourable monument to his memory.

A few hints concerning his history may nevertheless, be proper to gratify a curiosity which is natural, and at the same time furnish seasonable instruction. The Rev. *Mr. Samuel Clark* had the honour to descend from a family which for many generations had been eminent for learning and piety. *Mr. Samuel Clark* of Bennet Fink, the historian, author of *Select Lives*, the *Marrow of Ecclesiastical History*

tory, and several other valuable pieces, and *Mr. Samuel Clark* of Aylesbury, author of the *Annotations on Scripture*, were his ancestors. * *The Rev. Dr. Samuel Clark* of St. Albans, his father, was in every view a very amiable, and a great, man. Among many excellent qualities he was remarkable for the pains he took with the young people under his pastoral care. * Hence we may easily conclude he paid uncommon attention to the education of his own children; especially of this son, who was early inclined and devoted to the ministry. From being under the care of a very wise and pious and learned father, he came, furnished with good stores of classical learning, maxims of prudence and principles of religion, to the academy at Northampton under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Doddridge. The intimate friendship which had long subsisted between the families secured him every advantage he could enjoy under a most able and affectionate tutor. His father lived to see him enter on the ministry in a manner which no doubt revived and delighted his heart, tho' he was far advanced in years and bowed down with infirmities. On the conclusion of his studies, Mr. Clark was chosen by his tutor to assist him in the
busi-

* See Dr. Doddridge's Sermon for Dr. Clark in the 3d vol. of his Sermons and Tracts, præ. p. 256 and p. 263. note.

business of the academy, and in little more than a year, when that great and good man was obliged to retire on account of his health, he committed the care both of his academy and congregation to him. The manner in which he discharged this trust not only gave general satisfaction, but greatly surprized all who were acquainted with him, and raised the highest idea of his talents, and the excellent dispositions of his heart *. When the academy was removed to *Daventry*, he kindly continued as assistant in it for five years; and I take pleasure in acknowledging in this publick manner, that his friendship, his abilities, and his prudent counsels were of essential service, and mainly contributed to the reputation and success, whatever they have been, with which that institution has been conducted.

From thence he removed to this place : † and here I may naturally close the detail. I need not tell you, ‡ that the heart of his colleague hath safely trusted in him; and that they have lived together, for more

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* During the Doctor's absence from home, and using the prescribed means for the restoration of his health, he often mentioned it to his friends as a singular happiness that God had given him an assistant, (*Mr. Clark*) to whom he could cheerfully consign the care of his academy and congregation; and (as he expresseth it in a letter to a friend from Bristol) "whose great prudence and "wise disposition of affairs made him quite easy as to both." *Mr. Orton's Life of Dr. Doddridge*, 8vo p. 339.

† At Midsummer, 1757.

‡ Prov. xxxi. 11.

than twelve years, in the most entire harmony, friendship, and confidence. I need not tell you, how ¹ he preached the word, was instant in season, and out of season : what pains he took to know the state of his flock, and how assiduously he attended to all the cases which might more especially demand a pastor's care : how constantly and affectionately he attended the sick ; how diligently he sought out the distressed, how liberally he imparted to them of the substance with which God had blessed him ; and with what spirit he entered into all schemes of publick charity, especially for the relief of the sick, and the instruction of the poor. I need not tell you, with how much condescension and affability he, who was courted by the learned and polite ; and knew how to relish their company, conversed with the poorest and most illiterate persons ; esteeming those, as I have often heard him say, his happy days, which he spent in discoursing with them on religious subjects with a freedom, which some persons in higher life are neither inclined to use nor allow. I hope, I need not remind you who are entering upon the world, what various schemes he formed for your benefit, or the prudence and resolution with which he carried them into execution ; the youth of the
society,

society, what *pains* he bestowed in catechising you ; or you, children, of the obliging and instructive notice he took of you, when occasionally visiting your parents. How much do you owe to such a minister ? how dear should his memory be to you ? how thankful should you be that he was fixed amongst you ? I need not observe in this place, that his general conversation was admirably calculated to do good : that he was always modest and humble, but never mean ; that a decent chearfulness and a flow of good nature appeared in his familiar visits, without ever sinking below his character ; so that it might seem impossible for his acquaintance either not to love, or not to reverence him. You must have remarked his easy natural manner of introducing instructive and serious hints ; so that a person must be grievously wanting to himself, who spent an hour in his company without being the wiser and the better : that it appeared to be his concern, wherever he was, to be doing good ; and his delight, when an opportunity offered, whoever was the object of it.

His genius was solid and good : his understanding was clear ; his judgment strong ; his memory faithful : his passions were naturally cool, and were brought under the most exact regulation : his affections were warm, and

his heart susceptible of the tenderest sentiments : his diligence, resolution, and perseverance were uncommonly great : his knowledge of the world was so extensive and exact, his penetration so great, his heart so honest, his friendship so sincere, and his tongue under such wise command, that he was consulted by his friends in the most intricate and delicate affairs ; and I will venture to say, they never repented of the confidence they reposed in him, and generally saw reason to follow his advice. His usefulness in this respect cannot be estimated. How many persons will be cut to the heart by addressing to them the prophet's question, “* Is thy counsellor perished ?” This uncommon sagacity was attended with the greatest generosity, and the nicest sense of honour ; so that I may affirm he was never suspected of meanness, artifice or cunning. In the character of a son, and a brother, he was a finished model. His conduct as a minister, I have had occasion to mention in various views ; but have not been able in any of them to do him justice, as you well know. Such were the grounds of that hearty esteem, that tender affection, that lively gratitude, that high regard and veneration, on account of which I am persuaded I may apply to many of you, as justly as to any Christians in modern times, the

strong

strong words of the Apostle Paul, “¹ I bear you record that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to him :” and you well know that his cares, his influence, his usefulness and esteem were not confined to this congregation ; but reached to persons and societies in the neighbourhood, and even to a great distance. In a word, a person of his years so wise, so useful, so highly esteemed, so universally lamented, I never knew, and I believe has seldom been known.

That his years were so few, that he was cut off in the prime of his life and usefulness, and in such an awful * manner, are to us matter of unfeigned and bitter lamentation. But let us be silent, considering ^m that God hath done it. This affliction was brought upon us by what we call an accident : many circumstances, which led to it, were as contingent and fortuitous as any we can imagine ; and it is natural to reflect “ had this been done, or that “ omitted, our loss had been prevented.” But are not accidents as much under the direction of

* He was flung from his horse in one of the streets of Birmingham, on Lord’s day morning, Dec. 3, as he was setting out to preach to a congregation at Oldbury, which he and his colleague, the Rev. Mr. Howell, alternately supplied. He languished under the effects of his fall for three days, but was very little, if at all, sensible during the whole time.

¹ Gal. iv. 15.

^m Psal. xxxix. 9.

of providence, as diseases ? * If a sparrow fall not to the ground without our Father ; surely the death of a man, by which so many important connexions are broken, and the probation of an immortal creature brought to a close, is an affair of too great moment to be overlooked by him : least of all, are we to imagine he was unconcerned when a good man fell ; one by whose death hundreds of God's faithful servants and dear children are grieved and suffer greatly, the cause of religion is deeply affected, a lamentable breach is made in the church, and the world is deprived of a person who bid as fair for being extensively useful for many years, as any character we have known. This was occasioned by an accident. But are we, therefore, to think it the work of chance ? Did it fall out without the approbation and appointment of God ? Was it an oversight in the great Governor of the world, and was he inattentive when it happened ? — What notions can we then have of providence ? or what trust can we place in it, if accidents like this are not within its plan, and under the direction of an allwise and gracious God ? and if they are, let us hold our peace and submit. ° “ His ways are right.” This is a dark and mysterious dispensation ; but it cannot be wrong. He may indeed be displeased, and mean to chastise

* Mat. x. 29.

° Hof. xiv. 9.

chastise us : it is proper, therefore, to say, “ show us wherefore thou contendest with us ;” to enquire what each of us may have done to forfeit so great a blessing and incur such a heavy correction. The manner of his death gives every sensible heart a particular shock. But here too let us acquiesce. Of what importance is it, in what way a good man goes to heaven ? If the soul be but safe, it is below the magnanimity of a Christian to be much concerned about the little circumstances of the time and place and manner of his death ? much less can we suppose they are recollected with regret, by a spirit that is safely arrived : and, as the great Mr. *Howe* observes, * if God be pleased, and the glorified creature pleased, who are we that we should be displeased ?

You have indeed much cause to mourn ; I must however call upon you, the members of this congregation, to engage in an act of praise. Bless God that you are not † “ like sheep not having a shepherd.” Be thankful that the life of your other dear and honoured pastor, tho’ often threatened, is still continued. Pity him, and carry it tenderly to him, under that load of sorrow, which has rendered him incapable of assisting you on this occasion ; the only consideration

* *Howe’s* life prefixed to his works, p. 34.

† Mark vi. 32.

sideration which could have engaged me to attempt it. Endeavour by all the tokens of kindness and respect to relieve his mind, and make his labours among you pleasant and useful.

In the choice of a colleague to him proceed with coolness, deliberation and unanimity. Let every one follow the things which make for peace, and consult the good of the whole, without any undue concern for the gratification of his own inclination and taste. Nothing would have grieved your late pastor more than the apprehension of discord in the choice of a successor. Shew that you have profited by the example he set you of caution, moderation and publick spirit.

By considering your loss, by observing your countenances, by reflecting on my own feelings, I know your sorrow exceeds expression. I pity you, and demand your pity. None but my own heart and he who searcheth it know what I have lost, and what I feel. But let us remember, the consolations of God are not small. The Apostle suggests a noble support under sorrows of every kind in the words that follow my text. "Jesus Christ is yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same." Tho' friends and kindred, tho' the most valuable members of the church and its most useful ministers, die,

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the

the Christian Religion is the same, and may still administer those safe directions and solid supports, which sincere believers have derived from it in every age. Christ has the same regard for his church and people he ever had. He who employed and furnished and blessed the ministers we lament, can raise up others with equal talents; or, with inferior abilities, can render them equally useful. To him let us seek; on him let us rely; in him let us rejoice; and ascribe to him, as the most wise and gracious head of the church, ^a blessing and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever. *Amen!*

^a Rev. v. 13.

G T H E

THE
O R A T I O N

Delivered at the Interment of the late
Rev^d. Mr. CLARK, *Dec. 13, 1769.*

Christian Friends!

WE are now met together to lodge the mortal remains of our dear deceased brother in *the house appointed for all living*: many of us, perhaps, to drop the parting tear into his bed of dust, deeply sorrowing that we shall see his face no more. As nothing can be said, or done by us to augment his happiness, what remains is to present you with some reflections suggested by the affecting breach made upon us by this mournful event: and to these reflections I now crave your candid and serious attention.

The language of the sacred oracles is, *It is appointed unto men once to die.* Heb. ix. 27. The observation and experience of thousands of
years

years have convinced us of the stability of the decree, assuring us that *life itself is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*. The repugnance which nature feels to a dissolution of the present frame, makes the decree, at first view, appear harsh and severe. Why should the life of man be limited by threescore years and ten? Why should death be permitted to put a period to our present enjoyments, and to dissolve those pleasing connections of friendship which have been formed in life, and have been the source of it's chief happiness?

This difficulty, however great, may be solved, even by our present limited powers of reason and understanding, as we must see that the innumerable successions of generations which take place in the world, are necessary for the amplification of the scheme of Providence in communicating existence, sensation, and happiness to an infinitely greater number of beings, than if one generation only were to occupy the earth. Besides, as it evidently enters into the plan of Providence that this should be a state of discipline and trial for another and an eternal world, it is reconcileable to reason that, when the period of time necessary for a state of probation is expired,

every subject of the Divine government should be called to the reward of his conduct, and to the fruit of his doings : that those, *who by a patient continuance in well doing, have sought for glory, honour, and immortality*, might obtain *eternal life* ; but that those *who have not obeyed the truth, but have obeyed unrighteousness*, might receive their portion of *indignation and wrath*.

But what most humbles the pride, and mocks the present investigations of reason ; what is the greatest trial of our faith and confidence in the wisdom of the great ruler of the world, is sometimes to see the most useful, the most desirable, and the most important life cut off at once, in the very midst of its meridian vigour and glory. Why should the poor helpless infant be deprived of its tender parent ? Why should the amiable friend, the benevolent heart, the useful, the laborious, and the faithful minister be taken off, by the inexorable hand of death, in the midst of his days, and in the midst of his usefulness ? Why should mankind be deprived of the living forms of animated piety, as exhibited in the shining examples of eminent Christians ? Why should the persuasive voice, which delivered the truths of God to listening men, be in a moment lost in silence, to be heard no more ?

more? Why should the young and vigorous tree, covered with blossoms, or laden with fruit, be instantly cut down, and consigned to corruption?

These are hard questions, which yet must occur to distressed minds; probably to many now present: and indeed in the first transports of heart-felt grief, the pain arising from an inability to solve these doubts and difficulties, may be inexpressible.

But even here we are furnished with a variety of considerations by the Christian dispensation, which, if they do not fill us with joy, may yet moderate our sorrows, and support us under them. We may derive some relief here, even from our own ignorance: our ignorance of the wise schemes of Providence, and of all its remote, but indissoluble connections. Whoever acknowledges the being of God, must acknowledge his infinite wisdom. However pungent then the grief of our souls may be, that we shall see the face, and hear the voice of our dear and deceased brother no more, yet it becomes our peculiar duty to place an unlimited confidence in the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father; and it becomes our interest, and will be our best relief, to look forward to that
blessed,

bleſſed, that glorious day, in which He who is *the reſurrection and the life*, ſhall come to awake the ſleeping duſt which we are now depoſiting here, in order *to faſhion it like unto his own glorious body*; when that which is ſown in *corruption*, ſhall be raiſed in *incorruption*; that which is ſown in *weakneſs*, ſhall be raiſed in *power*; when the *mortal ſhall put on immortality*, and that which is *corruptible*, ſhall put on *incorruption*; even when *mortality ſhall be abſorbed in life*, and *death itſelf ſhall be ſwallowed up in victory*.

Supported by theſe glorious proſpects, and in the full belief of this peculiar and animating doctrine of Chriſtianity, we now commit the mortal part of our worthy deceased brother to this bed of duſt. Sorrow we may: ſorrow every heart muſt, under the loſs of ſo uſeful a member of the Chriſtian community; ſo worthy a miniſter of the Chriſtian church. But ſtill, let ours be the ſorrow of Chriſtians; let us *not ſorrow as thoſe who have no hope concerning them who are aſleep in Jeſus: for if we believe that Jeſus died and roſe again, even ſo them, who ſleep in Jeſus, ſhall God bring with him: for the Lord ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God, when the dead in Chriſt ſhall*

shall be first raised, in order to be for ever with the Lord. Let us, who survive, remember those lessons which this affecting event of Providence should teach us all ; particularly, not to depend upon the long continuance of life, but to have immediate recourse to all the duties and consolations of true religion ; every day doing that we have been sent into the world to do, assuredly depending upon it, that in due time *we shall reap, if we faint not.*

THE following Hymn, composed by a friend, was sung after Sermon, and it is not doubted that it will be acceptable to the readers, and particularly so to those for whose use it was drawn up.

I.

WHILE deep distress invades each heart,
And sorrow gushes from our eyes,
Great God, thy powerful aid impart ;
Teach us thy ways are good and wise.

II.

Fain would we bow beneath thy rod,
And every friend to thee resign ;
Thou art our Father and our God,
And all our *dearest* hopes are thine.

III.

III.

What tho' we see our friends no more ;
 No more attend their pleasing voice ;
 In higher strains they still adore,
 And still their souls in thee rejoice.

IV.

A pious pleasure fills the mind
 While we reflect on all their ways ;
 To think we *here* so oft have join'd
 In fervent prayer, in thankful praise.

V.

Strike deep in ev'ry mournful breast,
 O God, the solemn truths they spoke !
 May our whole lives be thus imprest,
 And we will *blefs* the awful stroke.

VI.

And may we strive, like him we mourn,
 Each ruder passion to controul,
 May equal love and goodness burn,
 And take possession of the soul !



T H E E N D.